

ATSUGEWI STICK GAME

SUMMARY: Students learn and play the Atsugewi Stick Game, a guessing game played by Atsugewi children.

GOAL: To enrich student understanding of the lifestyle of the Atsugewi indian tribe.

OBJECTIVES: Students will be able to: (1) Explain three reasons why the Atsugewi traveled to Lassen Volcanic National Park in the summer. (2) play a traditional indian game that was played by adults and children. (3) Describe at least three Atsugewi summer activities.

GRADE LEVEL: Third through Fifth.

TIME REQUIRED: Two 45-60 minute periods.

LOCATION: Classroom and/or Lassen Volcanic National Park

MATERIALS NEEDED: 6 sticks (4 to 6 inches long) per student. One piece of bone for each student(a stick 4 inches long can be marked and used in place of bones).

SUBJECTS COVERED: History/Social Science, Language Arts, Science, Visual and Performing Arts

KEY WORDS: Atsugewi (awt soo gay wee), cooperation

BACKGROUND FOR TEACHERS: The Atsugewi people lived northeast of Lassen Park in the Hat Creek valley. In the summer Atsugewi people often traveled to the higher mountains in what is now Lassen Volcanic National Park. Their objectives were to hunt, fish, trade, gather various plants, and to socialize with other indian tribes or families. Children who made the trip spent time exploring and playing active games with each other. Sometime for reasons of safety or because they needed to not disturb adults involved in trading, they played sedentary games. These were times when they needed to stay close to the adults and entertain themselves. The Stick Game was one game they played during these

times. An excellent source of information about the Atsugewi and other indians of the Lassen area can be found in the book *Indians of Lassen* by Paul E. Schulz. This book is available at Lassen Volcanic National Park.

INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE: Have the class gather the sticks needed for the game (6 per student, about 4 to 6 inches long, plus one extra to be used as a bone. In class prepare the sticks. Have the students peel the bark off all sticks. If you decide to use bones, chicken leg bones work well. All of the sticks should be decorated. The bones should be decorated and marked so players can easily recognize them from their six sticks. Suggested markings might include Indian symbols, nature symbols, etc. After students have prepared their game materials, read aloud to them the information brief titled, *Atsugewi Summer Activities*. Discuss the brief and then have them answer the questions listed below. They may need to have copies of the brief available for reference in order to answer the questions. After the sticks and bones are prepared and the questions answered set aside plenty of time for students to play the game as described on the Stick Game Instruction Page. If you are planning a field trip to Lassen you may wish to have them play the game there.

Questions:

1. List three reasons the Atsugewi traveled to Lassen Volcanic National Park.
2. In what ways did the Atsugewi catch fish?
3. Name at least three ways the Atsugewi hunted.
4. Why do you think gathering plants took so much of the Atsugewi's time?
5. What were some of the reasons the Atsugewi gathered plant materials.
6. What were two social activities of the Atsugewi?

EXTENSION/ENRICHMENT: (1) Have the students make up variations of this game and share it with the class. (2) Have them teach other students or adults how to play the game. Have the students draw a picture of Atsugewi summer activities.

ASSESSMENT: Have the students demonstrate and play the game. Use the student answers from the questions to assess their knowledge of Atsugewi summer activities. Have them write a story based on the information brief.

Atsugewi Summer Activities

In the summer when the snow melted in the high country, Indians from throughout the Lassen region traveled to the cool higher mountain areas to trade, fish, hunt, and vacation in the beautiful land that today makes up Lassen Volcanic National Park. The Atsugewi were among those people. They fished for trout in the mountain lakes, but their fishing was very different from fishing with a rod and reel. They speared fish with two-pointed or four-pointed spears. They trapped fish in basket fish nets and also chased them into pools created by partial rock dams, then scooped them out with baskets and nets. They also used a simple hook or series of hooks attached to a line to catch fish.

They hunted rabbit, fox, deer, squirrels, other small mammals and, occasionally, elk and bear. They hunted in a variety of ways including with bow and arrow, spears, snares, knives, by nooses placed along game trails and by driving game into large pits. The Atsugewi bows and arrows were of very high quality because they had a good supply of yew wood.

Gathering various plant materials for food, blankets, medicine, furnishings, and tools occupied a significant amount of Atsugewi time in Lassen Volcanic National Park. For basket making they gathered maidenhair ferns, bear grass, sedges, pine roots, slender willow ends, and juniper. Plant foods included Manzanita berries, sugar pine nuts, tiger lily, wild onion, serviceberries, elderberries, gooseberries, currants, buckthorn berries, and juniper berries.

Socializing was a very important part of the Atsugewi summer. Games were a fun part of the social activity and were played by people of all ages. Many of the games were guessing games with a large variety of wooden sticks used in various ways. Feasts were perhaps the most important social gathering of the Atsugewi and happened whenever there was an abundance of food. Of course, large feasts were scheduled and planned, usually to commemorate a special event, but a particularly successful hunt resulting in an abundance of meat was reason enough to call for a feast. Trading with other Indian tribes was also an important part of the summer social activity. It was an opportunity to obtain plant materials, tools, and other survival necessities not normally available to them.

Summer as with all the seasons was an important time of year for the Atsugewi. It provided opportunities to accomplish things necessary for survival in a world

intimately connected to the earth.

ATSUGEWI STICK GAME INSTRUCTIONS

This game can be played many different ways. After you learn to play the two games described here, you may want to make up your own game.

GAME 1: 2 PLAYERS

Sit down facing each other and put all sticks except the bones in a pile between you. These become score sticks. Each player takes turns hiding his/her bone in one hand behind his/her back. The other player tries to choose the hand where the bone is hidden. If the correct hand is chosen, the player who guessed correctly takes one stick from the score stick pile and places in front of him/her. If the hand chosen is incorrect, the player hiding the bone takes a stick from the score stick pile and places in front of him/her. Then it's the other player's turn to hide the bone and let the opponent guess which hand holds it. A correct guess earns a scoring stick. An incorrect guess means your opponent gets a scoring stick. When one person has all the scoring sticks, that person wins the game.

GAME 2: 2 PLAYERS PER TEAM, 2 TEAMS

In this game, the two players on one team sit closely together side by side facing the two players on the other team who are also sitting closely together side by side. All (or some agreed upon number depending on how long you want the game to last) scoring sticks are placed in a pile between the two teams. The first team passes the two bones back and forth between each other behind their backs for a set amount of time (10 seconds). At the end of the time, the challengers must guess which team member has the bones. If they guess correctly, they move a scoring stick in front of them. If they guess incorrectly, their opponents move a scoring stick in front of them. Then the other team has to pass and hide the bone until the given time is up and their opponents guess where it is. A correct guess earns a scoring stick. An incorrect guess means your opponents get a scoring stick. When one team has all the scoring sticks, they are the winners.